

Given your interest in federal land management, I want to tell you about an event I held regarding the [Catastrophic Wildfire Community Protection Act](#), legislation I have introduced to combat the wildfire threat to communities in our area and across America. Living in Northern California, you know all too well the danger wildfires pose to our lives and property. For too long, frivolous lawsuits from fringe environmental activists have prevented the necessary thinning of our forests. It is essential that we liberate local fire prevention efforts by providing the people living in at-risk communities a greater role in protecting themselves. The *Catastrophic Wildfire Community Protection Act* would do exactly that by allowing critical forest thinning projects to go forward in a timely manner, and authorizing at-risk communities to implement the emergency action plans that they developed to reduce the threat of catastrophic fire. Click [here](#) to get more in-depth information on my legislation.



The event was held on the property of Moak family, who instead of evacuating during the 2008 fires, remained behind to defend their property. The surrounding area of Concow was decimated by those fires with over 100 residences lost, serving as a tragic example of the need for significant change in forest management policy. Fortunately, the Moaks were successful in protecting their property. Sadly, however, the 2008 fires took the lives of 12 individuals in Northern California and burned more than a million acres. You can read the full text of my prepared remarks below:

*First off, I would like to thank Pete Moak for hosting us here today. As you can see around you, Pete was in quite a fight a few years ago to protect his home and property. Fortunately he was successful in defending his property but the sad part is that the fire that threatened this community and Pete's home could have been significantly lessened in the first place.*

*The 2008 fire season saw more than a million acres of our forests burned, the tragic loss of*

*several wildland firefighters, the evacuation of thousands and the loss of hundreds of homes and businesses. Sadly, nearly three years later, the forest management situation has yet to improve, leaving the threat of another devastating wildfire season just around the next corner.*

*We cannot control the weather, lightning strikes, or an unfortunate human-induced spark, but we can control the overstocked and unhealthy forests that fuel these fires. Despite the enactment of numerous legislative and administrative actions to address this fuel, our forests and communities remain at-risk to the next lightning storm or stray spark.*

*Which brings us here today. In response to these conditions and the inability of previous efforts to reduce this dangerous fuels build-up. I have introduced the Catastrophic Wildfire Community Protection Act. This legislation builds on and expands existing authorities – such as those authorized by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 – to achieve fuels treatments in our at-risk communities to reduce the risk of wildfire through implementation of collaboratively developed fuels reduction and forest thinning projects. This bill also establishes an emergency process to expedite these projects should the county, in concurrence with the state, declare an emergency due to the threat of wildfire.*

*Most North State residents fully understand the reality facing the forests in their backyard. Unfortunately, balanced forest management continues to be opposed by people residing in cities far away from both the forests they supposedly aim to “protect” and the danger facing these communities. Under current law, these fringe groups are allowed to –for the cost of a postage stamp – file lawsuits against any forest management project on federal land that they happen to spot in the Federal Register. These actions occur notwithstanding the input and collaboration from professional foresters and other similarly-trained experts, thus allowing these minority views to displace the science-based efforts of the many individuals who hold a vested interest in sound forest management and reducing the dangerous fuel load around their communities.*

*It is my hope that this legislation can cut through this stalemate and help reduce the immediate risk affecting our forest communities. I will work with my colleagues in the House to move this legislation as quickly as possible. President Obama has spoke about ‘restoring science to its rightful place.’ I hope that President Obama and the Senate will join me in allowing commonsense forest management and science to prevail in response to the risk of catastrophic wildfire.*